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News Release

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Polish national indicted for alien smuggling

A 31-year-old Polish national was indicted yesterday in federal court for smuggling two illegal immigrants into the United States in Grand Marais.

Marek Jerzy Struzik was charged with one count of alien smuggling Aug. 20 in Minneapolis. His indictment alleges that on Aug. 1 he did knowingly and intentionally bring and attempt to bring into the U.S. two aliens, at a place other than a designated port of entry and at a place other than as designated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

According to a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol affidavit, two men were arrested at approximately 11:30 a.m. on Aug. 1. The two men said they had crossed the Pigeon River to illegally enter the U.S. The men, from Poland and Slovakia, said they were dropped off by Struzik in Canada at Middle Falls and that Struzik walked with them across the Pigeon River, went back to retrieve his vehicle, and was supposed to pick them up in Grand Portage State Park.

Struzik, who earlier on Aug. 1 had legally entered the country at the Grand Marais Border Patrol Station, was arrested. The affidavit stated that Struzik told officers that he was contacted in Poland by a man who offered him money to smuggle two people into the U.S. from Canada. The man paid for Struzik to fly into New York City and eventually to Duluth. On July 25, Struzik took a bus to Thunder Bay, Ontario, and was then instructed to fly to Toronto.

There, Struzik picked up the two men at the airport, drove back to Thunder Bay, and received instructions on how to smuggle the men into the U.S. Struzik was paid \$2,500 for his efforts.

If convicted, Struzik faces a potential maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Border Patrol, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Leshia Lee-Dixon.

An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.